



The early years of the CIFSS were centered mainly on the sport of track and field. Most of the early minutes of Council meetings were directed toward eligibility cases and how to run the annual track meet. Several other sports gained official sanctioning by the CIFSS when meet managers were assigned to those sports including football, basketball, swimming, water polo, baseball and tennis. Many of the sports were informal and played at the schools as intra mural activities or between schools without official approval of the CIFSS. Some sports, such as gymnastics and handball, were played in physical education classes without interscholastic competition. Reference can be found of wrestling in Los Angeles in 1892, when the Los Angeles Athletic Club showcased an athletic exhibition of, “boxing set-tos between the cleverest amateurs, wrestling bouts, club swinging and gymnastic feats of all kinds.” Wrestling began to gain some popularity in high school gym classes during the 1920’s because it was inexpensive (this is the time of the depression) and met the needs of boys who were smaller. Fortunately, for smaller athletes, a whole system of equitable weight classes allowed students to play 110 pound and 140 pound basketball along with lower weight football teams. The largest problem that faced wrestling was the fact that it was associated with *boxing*’s violent side and many felt it was a too “rough a sport.”

The first reference to wrestling in the Council and Executive Committee meetings is found in the minutes of April 24, 1926,

“8. WRESTLING MADE C.I.F. SPORT

It was moved by Moore, and seconded by Owen, and carried, that we hold a Southern California wrestling tournament in April, 1927, and that Mr. Ferrell of Long Beach be appointed Wrestling Manager for the school year 1926.”

It is interesting to note that a Championship Wrestling Tournament was held at Long Beach Poly in April of 1926, but was not official. From those minutes you would think wrestling was on its way to becoming a sanctioned sport...WRONG! It would take another ten years before that happened. Long Beach Poly and Whittier High School dominated this first tournament winning all the weight classes between the two schools. In 1926 there were eight weight classes.

There were still some feelings of uneasiness about wrestling and in the October 4, 1930, Council meeting it was noted that, "M. L. R. Ardouin, chairman of the Wrestling Committee of the A.A.U., addressed the Council on the benefits of wrestling as a sport and body builder. He urged the CIFSS to give wrestling a regular place on the interscholastic sports calendar (sanctioning). The President referred the matter to the Executive Committee for study and report." The answer came in the April 2, 1932, meeting with the following:

"17. Moved by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Cline, that the subject of wrestling remain in *status quo*. Carried."

The State CIF also had their doubts about wrestling when their November 19, 1932 minutes reminded the principals, "...that any boy who takes part in a boxing or wrestling match, not under the direct control of his school, shall be debarred from further High School athletic competition of any kind." It seemed that wrestling would continue as an unofficial sport between local schools who wanted to participate without the total acceptance of the CIFSS.

The local wrestling community was encouraged with the following from the April 27, 1935, Council minutes:

"8. Mr. Earl Chapman, Dean of Boys at Whittier High School, reported on a invitational wrestling Tournament sanctioned by the CIFSS and held recently at his school. He recommended that the CIFSS hold a wrestling championship each year.
Chair appointed Mr. Wolfe, Mr. Chapman, and Mr. Roy Moore, Wrestling Coach at Inglewood High School, to the committee."

The CIFSS now sanctioned the tournament and it should follow that they would sanction the sport of wrestling...WRONG! The answer to why CIFSS still did not want to anoint wrestling came from the Commissioner in the February 1, 1936, minutes:

WRESTLING CHAMPIONSHIP

"It was pointed out to the Executive Committee by the Commissioner of Athletics that all wrestling and boxing within the State of California where an admission fee is charged must be under the control of the State Athletic Commission. Since the CIFSS under no circumstances is willing to have its athletic activities controlled by any other organization the Executive Committee directed that there be no boxing or wrestling activities carried on under the supervision of the CIFSS Office."

Wrestling was now caught up in the politics of control over interscholastic sports. Fortunately, one year later, wrestling was finally accepted into the official sanctioned sports of CIFSS with the following annotation from the February 6, 1937, Council minutes:

“14. Mr. Van Patten read a letter from State Supervisor W. H. Orion stating that the State of California Legislature had amended the state law taking boxing and wrestling in college and high school out of the control of the State Athletic Commission and giving it back to the schools.
Mr. Van Patten recommended that our wrestling committee of last year be continued and be directed to arrange a wrestling championship if schools conducting the sport desired it. If such a championship be arranged that plans be submitted to the Executive Committee for approval.
There being no objection the Chair ruled the recommendations approved.”

FINALLY

The first official CIFSS Wrestling Championship held in 1937, was won by San Diego High School coached by Frank Crosby and Whittier High School, as it was in 1926, was the runner-up. The 1937, the financial report stated that entry fees for the tournament had netted \$10.00 and the medals cost \$18.08.

The dominate teams in the early years of wrestling (1926 to 1937) were Whittier and San Diego High Schools. From 1938 to 1954, San Diego High School was either the champion or runner-up all under Frank Crosby.

